



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE HISTORY OF EARLY EDUCATION.

II. THE SEMITIC RACES.

ASSYRIANS AND BABYLONIANS; ARABS; PHœNICIANS.

(Concluded.)

Epochs of Jewish Educational History.—Having made these general remarks, as applicable to the whole period of Jewish history, down to the return from the captivity, (536 B. C.), I would next point out that it is necessary to distinguish four epochs of Jewish educational history. (1) The first period extends from the emigration down to Samuel and Saul. Samuel died 1043 B. C. Prior to this date, the education was such as I have indicated—purely domestic and traditional. The Levites—particularly those of the house of Aaron (priests proper)—were of course trained in a knowledge of the law and of the sacrificial ritual. Being scattered over the country they could officiate at local altars—these, generally, being of a very primitive kind.

(2) The second period extends from Samuel till after the Babylonian captivity, 536 B. C. The Hebrews had now become an agricultural people, living largely in villages and cities from which they went out to their work, and consequently in closer communication with each other. But as regards the mass of the people there is as yet no evidence of any instruction save oral tradition and sacrifice at local altars. Girls were taught the domestic arts, including weaving and the making of garments and cooking. Boys accompanied their fathers to their daily labor in the field or the workshop. Music and dancing seem to have been practiced by the young men and women. As regards the Levites it was otherwise, but their education was even now of a very restricted kind. Samuel (as I have said above) gave form and substance—if he did not solely found—schools outside the temple ceremonial for the more extended and profounder study of the law in all its ramifications, and in its philosophic aspects. These were the “Schools of the Prophets.” We find these at Gibeon, Rama, Bethel, Jericho and Gilgal. The students in these schools were almost wholly, but not exclusively, of the Levitical order. They maintained a high standard of intellectual activity,

and it seems to me that they stood to the religious and social life of the time very much in the intellectual relation which some of the monastic orders stood to European society in the 13th century. They for the most part lived in huts made of the branches of trees and wore a simple and characteristic dress. The priestly order were occupied with ritual and traditionary forms of words and did not rise to so high a conception of religion as these schools of the prophets tried to foster. These prophets and "sons of the prophets" (as the aspirants were called), constituted colleges numbering from 50 to 400 which were really of the nature of theological institutions, and were presided over by a senior member formally elected. Music and sacred poetry were taught, as well as astronomy. Out of these schools came the national poets and historians. As preachers, the prophets promulgated the righteous government of the world, they inculcated morals and taught a spiritual life far transcending the religion of mere temple services. They are the most interesting fact in the educational history of the Jews. During this period, as during those which preceded and followed it, the priests performed the higher sacrificial acts, and the Levites continued to have their share in certain parts of the traditional ceremonial, and in the propagation of the law. They were scattered over the country as I have said, and came up in rotation to discharge their functions in the temple. But the *general education* of the people was still no more than I have sketched in my general remarks.

(3) The third period extends from 536 B. C. to the birth of Christ. The destruction of the temple and the captivity broke to pieces for a time the Judaic organization, which indeed prior to the captivity never seems to have been very strict in its character. But after the return, the most strenuous efforts were made to restore what had been lost and to formulate the whole Jewish conception of theocratic life. The temple and its services again flourished. The schools of the prophets seem to have been now superseded by the scribes and the synagogues. These latter were instituted in all parts of the country, and in these the law was read and schools were held. The "SCRIBES" doubtless did much of this educational work. Whatever may have been the original function of the class called scribes we may conclude that before the exile and afterwards they were engaged in making copies of the books of the law and the prophets, as well as in as-

sisting the legal business of the citizens. A priest or Levite might be a scribe but the occupation was not confined to any order. Ezra, 5th century B. C., was both priest and scribe. After the return from the captivity the class increased in number. They became in fact the learned and legal class and as such were teachers—expounders of the law. They also extended the law by their glosses and interpretations. The legal tradition of the scribes was oral and the amount of memory work demanded of those who would excel in this profession was enormous. They taught chiefly in the porches of the temple and in synagogues and gradually the whole law and its application to the affairs of life fell into their hands. Unless they had private means they did not always devote themselves exclusively to study and teaching but followed also some special industry. These schools of the scribes were headquarters of disputations by which difficult points were settled. Everything was committed to memory and so handed down. They came to be known in the beginning of the Christian Era as the “Rabbinical” schools and acquired gradually an influence with the people greater than that of the priests. The heads of these schools were first technically called “Rabbis” in the first century after the birth of Christ.

It was a great fall from the schools of the prophets to the schools of the scribes—from the spiritual life to the formal, legal, and external; but doubtless the gradual multiplication of legal and ritual observances tended to preserve the Jewish nation in its exclusiveness and in “soundness of faith.”

The period after the captivity is generally called the Talmudic period. The Talmud began in the production of the Mishna a paraphrase of the law written in Aramaic, a knowledge of classical Hebrew having been lost during the exile. Then followed in future generations commentaries, homilies, etc., which, with a large mass of oral tradition, constituted the Talmudic literature, all centering round the law and its interpretation and practical application. As tradition accumulated, the schools of the scribes, as depositories of all learning bearing alike on the great and small affairs of life, became more dominating and authoritative than the schools of the prophets had ever been, and made their power felt as guides in the whole business of life and deciders of

cases among the whole population. They seem gradually, after the fall of Jerusalem, to have succeeded, as Rabbins, to the positions and privileges of the priesthood. We must bear in mind when thinking of the instruction given by the scribes and rabbis, that the law among the Jews meant not only the religious and moral law, but covered the whole field of what we designate by the name of civil and canon law. And so great was the mass of oral and written tradition that to be a worthy rabbi demanded very great learning.

The Talmud contains not only the civil and canonical law of the Jews, but practically their whole literature outside the Scriptures of the Old Testament. It was 190 A. D. before a critical edition of the Mishna was issued, and 270 A. D. before a critically edited authoritative commentary appeared.

The diffusion of synagogues in which the Law was read and expounded was an educational movement. The elementary schools occasionally attached to these must have given an opportunity, not enjoyed in pre-exilic times, to clever and ambitious boys to obtain education. This was a distinct educational advance for the country; but it is not to be inferred from it that instruction in reading, writing, arithmetic, and other school subjects had yet reached a large proportion of the population.* The scribe schools were voluntary, and exclusive rather than popular. Still we may fairly conclude that for probably 400 years B. C. elementary instruction was at least generally accessible, while advanced instruction under a scribe of note was within reach of the few. In the higher education, geometry and astronomy still held a prominent place as in the schools of the prophets; and philosophy under Hellenic influences engaged many devotees.

(4). The fourth period is from the time of Christ onwards, when the scribe schools, now beginning to be known as rabbinical schools, became further extended and consolidated. Up to this date the majority of the Jews could neither read nor write, and they were dependent on the scribes for instruction as well as for legal advice in their social and business relations. The rabbinical

* Rénan, in his *Vie de Jésus*, says: "Jesus doubtless learned to read and write according to the method of the East, which consists of putting into hands of the child a book which he repeats in concert with his comrades till he knows it by heart." (Quoted from Payne's *Compayré*.)

cal order, which was at once priest, preacher, teacher, and legal adviser, must have exercised an almost supreme power.*

Reverence for the past governed the intellectual life of the rabbinical schools, as it had governed those of the scribes and the whole life of the people from the earliest times. Their method of teaching seems to have been confined to repetition, faithful reproduction, and more or less slavish commentary. Orthodoxy was the prime qualification for a high place in the schools. The Rabbins, in fact, exercised an intellectual despotism of the sternest kind. The outcome of the whole teaching was, as regards the mass of the people, of little effect, except in confirming and spreading a knowledge of the law ; as regards the literary class, or scribe (Rabbinical), the outcome was a succession of commentaries and homilies and opinions which embodied the wisdom of a long succession of teachers.

It was not till a short time before the destruction of Jerusalem (A. D. 70), that primary schools became general and these do not concern us so closely as the pre-Christian education ; for nothing later than the second century before Christ can be regarded as of *purely* Israelitish growth. It was A. D. 64 that elementary schools were first made obligatory by the High Priest Josué ben Gamala. One teacher was to be employed where there were 25 children, an assistant when the number exceeded 25 and two teachers where the number of pupils exceeded 40. These schools were everywhere diffused in the countries inhabited by Jews,—indeed wherever there was a synagogue. The instruction was gratuitous. The introduction of alien races and religions among the Jews and the dispersion of the Jews themselves made people and schools essential to the protection and preservation of the true faith. It was this and the example of foreign nations which led to the gen-

*Schmidt quotes from a Hebrew writing, the following saying : "A priest has precedence of a Levite, a Levite of other Israelites, a common Israelite of a Bastard ; that is to say other things being equal. But if a Bastard is a pupil of the Wise and the High-priest not educated by the Rabbis, so has such a Bastard precedence over such a High-priest." Again, "Who strives against his teacher, speaks against the Godhead ; who quarrels with his teacher, quarrels with the Godhead ; who grumbles at his teacher, grumbles against the Highest."

eral diffusion of instruction among the people. Without them the national tradition and law would have gradually disappeared.

It is interesting to note that the Jews were the first to insist on the education of the *whole people*.

The course of instruction was as follows: From the sixth to the tenth year the law (Pentateuch) was the only study along with writing and arithmetic. From the tenth to the fifteenth year, the pupil was instructed in that part of the Talmud called Mishna, substantially a paraphrastic development of the law. We can easily understand that such instruction must have inflicted a grievous burden on young minds and crushed out all spontaneity of life.

At this period as at all previous periods the sole aim of female education was the making of the accomplished house-wife.

The pupils wrote on waxen tablets with a style, and, when advanced, on paper or parchment with a pen.

Up to the age of thirteen the boy was not expected to either know or fulfill the whole law. He then at the age of puberty entered on the rights and duties of a full-grown Israelite.

That the discipline was severe might be inferred from the intolerable nature of the instruction given and from the material rewards and punishments which were so prominent a characteristic of the Jewish religion. Even the honouring of the father and the mother has a material blessing attached to it, and no other. Hence pain and pleasure of a bodily kind were the only corrections which occurred to the early Jewish writers when they touched on education. "He that spareth his rod hateth his son, but he that loveth him, chastiseth him betimes."—Prov. 13, 24. "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying."—Prov. 19, 18. "Foolishness is bound in the heart of the child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him."—Prov. 22, 15. "Withhold not correction from the child; for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod and shalt deliver his soul from hell."—Prov. 23, 13. In Deuteronomy 21, 18, we find that if the rod fails, the son is to be stoned to death "at sight" of the elders of the city. This conception of discipline seems to have prevailed till about the time of Christ.

In so far as severity of discipline was modified after the birth of Christ, it was under the influence of the Talmudic writings, and

not of the law in its purity. Certain Jewish writers will doubtless give a more glowing account of the education of the ancient people than I have given. Patriotic motives are to be respected.

Although the post-Talmudic (or post-exilic) education does not directly concern us, the Talmudic writings themselves contain so much that bears on education as understood by the Jew when brought under humane Hellenic (and probably Christian) influences, that I shall add a few remarks on this stage of Jewish education.*

The School and the Schoolmaster.—That the work of the school teacher holds a high place in the Talmud could be shown by numerous quotations. But it would be to confound chronology to regard the Talmudic precepts as indications of opinion among the ancient Israelites. They are to be met with only after the Jews had been in contact with the Greek and Roman civilizations, while some of them belong to early mediæval history. "It is the breath of school children that sustains society," says R. Jehuda Hanassi. "He who studies and does not teach others is like a myrtle in the desert." The teachers had to be married men and not too young; for "Instruction by young teachers is like sour grapes and new wine; instruction by older teachers, however, is like ripe grapes and old wine."

"Your teacher and your father have need of your assistance; help your teacher before helping your father, for the latter has given you only the life of this world, while the former has secured for you the life of the world to come."

Method.—As regards method, the following text is wise: "If you attempt to grasp too much at once, you grasp nothing at all."

On the subject of memory, it is also well said:—"Four dispositions are found among the disciples,—he who comprehends quickly and quickly forgets; such a one loses more than he gains: he who with difficulty comprehends, but does not readily forget, gains more than he loses: he who comprehends easily, but does not easily forget, has a good portion: he who slowly comprehends and forgets quickly has an evil portion." One of the instructions for learning by heart deserves notice:—"To speak out loudly the

* I base what I here say on Spiers and on Gelder's *Die Volksschule des jüd.: Alt.*, 1872, as verified by reference to other writers.

sentence which is being learned strengthens the same in the memory." "Open thy mouth in order that thou mayest retain the subject of thy study, and that it may remain alive within thee." The wife of Rabbi Meir, on meeting a certain student who was learning his lessons in a low tone, rebuked him, saying that it was not the right way of learning. "Rabbi Elieser had a pupil who studied without articulating the words of his lessons, and in consequence thereof he forgot everything in three years."

With regard to the system of repetition Rabbi Akiba says, "The teacher should strive to make the lesson agreeable to the pupils by clear reasons, as well as by frequent repetitions, until they thoroughly understand the matter, and are enabled to recite it with great fluency." A certain "Rabbi" it is further stated, "had a disciple with whom he repeated the subject four hundred times, until he became a thorough master of the same."

Special regard should be had to the child at the beginning of his studies, because "what is learned as a child remains in his memory as ink written on new paper." Nevertheless as the faculties of the pupils do not always expand with their advancing age, the Talmud advises in case the boy does not make progress in his studies, to exercise forbearance towards him up to his twelfth year, but that thenceforth he should be dealt with more severely. Experience proves, it is said, that children do not begin to show much mental capacity as a rule until their twelfth year.

Further, it is recommended to the teacher to have pauses and periods in each subject. "The Almighty Himself," it is said, "did not impart the law to Moses all at once, but in different divisions and pauses, so as to make it more intelligible. How much more then ought not this to be done by a human teacher?" Again "He who studies hastily and crams too much at once, his knowledge shall diminish; but he who studies by degrees or step by step, shall accumulate much wisdom and learning."

Brevity in imparting was likewise held to be an indispensable qualification of the teacher. He should, as much as possible, be concise and make use of few words. Far-fetched digressions, and seemingly skilled ramblings are to be avoided, and that which could be told the pupil in one word should not be imparted in three. "One should instruct the pupils in the shortest manner possible."

Discipline.—The discipline included in the Talmud, unlike that

of the ancient Jews, is mild and was doubtless largely influenced by the teaching of Christ; but corporal chastisement is recognized. "Although at first there should be shown indulgence to the child, yet further on, if it should prove stubborn and inattentive, a slight corporal punishment and some restrictions may be adopted."

The elder pupils, however, should not have to undergo corporal punishment for two reasons: first, it might wound their sense of honor; and secondly, lest it might arouse resistance. The Rabbins say, "a man who strikes his grown up son should be earnestly reprimanded because he transgresses the commandment, 'Thou shalt not put a stumbling block before the blind,' " which is thus explained by Rashi: Because being grown up he might rebel against his father, who would thus cause him to sin.

Again, if it should be found necessary to apply corporal punishment, it must be inflicted very mildly, and the master is not allowed to use a cane, but a light strap, in order not to injure the pupils.

In reference to this we read in the Talmud: "If thou art compelled to punish a pupil, do it only with gentleness; encourage those who make progress, and let him who does not, still remain in the class with his school fellows, for he will ultimately become attentive and vie with them."

R. Samuel Edels, in his Commentary on the Agadoth, writes: "Only those pupils should be punished in whom the master sees that there are good capacities for learning and who are inattentive; but if they are dull and cannot learn, they should not be punished." Just as punishment formed a part of school discipline, so also did reward. For we are told in the Talmud that Rabba had in his school some dainties of which he would occasionally make a present to his young pupils. Again, there is a saying, "children should be punished with one hand and caressed with two."

ADVANCED INSTRUCTION.

The whole law and the mass of oral traditions and interpretations was now the chief study. The foreign language most studied in the higher Rabbinical schools from 200 B. C. to 500 A. D. was Greek. This language was esteemed more highly than all other foreign tongues, and next to Hebrew, was considered the most beautiful of all. "The Torah (Law) may be translated only into

Greek, because only by this language can it be faithfully rendered. It is further said, "the Greek language may in every respect be used." It is true that Greek philosophy was suspected and denounced by the Rabbinical doctors for manifest reasons; but not more earnestly than by the Christian church after the third century A. D. The sages say of the tongue of Hellas, that the words "there is no blemish in her," may be applied to it; for "it distinguishes itself by a keen sense of that which is perfectly noble." "There are four languages" observes Rabbi Nathan, "which are distinguished by superior and special qualities. The Greek sounds beautifully in poetry on account of its rhythm; the Roman in war, on account of its sonorous masculine power; the Syriac in mournful songs, on account of its numerous dull, hollow, vowel-sounds; the Hebrew for its clear and articulate utterance in speech.*

Instruction in Greek seems to have been general, and a knowledge of this language formed an essential part of a good Rabbinical education. Greek philosophy and literature were studied profoundly. But the national literature, *i. e.*, the Bible, Mishna, and Gemara, continued to furnish the principal material for teaching in the schools.

The central idea of Jewish education, as the reader will now see, is the law and the tradition of the law—both these as the voice of God—with such general primary instruction in post-Talmudic times as was necessary to the main purpose, and this only. The law and the external observance of it in all its detail was the central if not the sole aim of education. Repetition and memory and the acquisition of what was very partially understood must accordingly have governed all method. This subjection of the human spirit to authority and the prominence given to external observances gave birth to a barren formalism. The spiritual conceptions which doubtless underlay the whole were for the few. The literary expression of them would naturally be exhausted in their literature once for all. The Jews were *par excellence* a race of theological genius. In their literature the personal relations of man to God as a god of moral law, find a language for

*The vessels of the Temple were marked with Greek letters.

themselves which has never been reached by any other race of men, and will probably never be superseded. But at this point all true progress of the intellect and imagination ends. The theory of life requires that the past shall be all in all. I do not believe that even the hard Chinese tradition could have resisted the disintegrating influences of Europe as Judaism has done. The spiritual unity of the race has been doubtless thereby secured but at an enormous sacrifice of humanity. Christ opens out a wider vista to the eye of man, and at no point checks his onward advance. In Christ we have a transition from the finite to the infinite. The Judaic identification of religion and the moral law is in principle sound, but the stereotyping of the latter in external observances emanating from an unquestioned authority, kills both. A free personal outlook on nature and life is, under these conditions, impossible. One must trust humanity as an ever-progressive reason, and take our chance of the incidental evils which may attend the practice of the humanistic faith.

Indeed we cannot say that religion and the moral law as we understand it, were one among the Jews, (as they boast it was and is), but rather the Sinaitic voice of God and legality—a system in which external prescriptions choked the purely moral, and still more the spiritual, element of the life of mind. These externalities being rigidly attended to, the Jew performed his part of the bargain with God—a mere business transaction. God thereupon was bound to perform his part which in early times was the granting of benefits in this life; subsequently, in this life and the next. There can be, it is true, no spiritual or religious life save that which the voice of God penetrates and sanctions; but, with the Jew, this voice of God practically became a detailed series of legal prescriptions and observances. God stood apart, and, like a schoolmaster, imposed rules, with rewards and penalties for observance and non-observance. This was the “letter” that killeth. Christ swept it away and preached the “Spirit” that giveth life, and thus transformed a national into a universal religion.

It seems strange that a system of life so encumbered with ceremonial should have attracted converts in the heathen world. But before and after the time of Christ, Greek, Roman and Oriental had lost faith in their gods and were looking for God and a moral system sanctioned by Him. This the Jew could give him; and

the observance of the ceremonial might or might not follow, fully or partially, according to the zeal of the proselyte. This universal and Hellenized side of the Jewish faith was represented by Philo Judaeus, a contemporary of Christ.

AUTHORITIES.

Scripture which ends 442 B. C.; thereafter Josephus. Various Encyclopaedias; the School-System of the Talmud by Spiers; L'éducation et l'instruction des enfans chez les anciens Juifs, par Jos. Simon; Geschichte der Erz. u. des Unt. bei der Israeliten Von B. Strassburger; Van Gelder's Die Volksschule des jüd: Alt: 1872;* Schürer's Jewish People in the time of Christ; Milman's History; and references to Schmidt, and Graez and Düncker's History of Antiquity; also to Professor Robertson Smith's Writings on the Semites.

S. S. Laurie.

University of Edinburgh.

THE MASTERY OF ENGLISH.

"The rarest excellence in literature is good prose." So said Mr. Warner at the Literary Congress. We shall not feel the full weight of this assertion without reflecting how enormously prose that essays to be "good" exceeds in amount the whole bulk of compositions in verse. Such an assertion, if true, ought to set educators diligently to thinking. When every educated man is supposed to be able to write good English, how is it that faultless prose is the rarest of all literary products?

Doubtless, for one reason, because its excellencies are so subtle, varied, and unobtrusive. The tyro in criticism can scan verse and point out a "gouty foot," an imperfect rhyme, or a halting cadence; but to say just why this passage in prose is or is not harmonious, to show precisely how the rhythm of a prose sentence fails to suit the included thought, is one of the ultimate attainments of criticism. Cicero points out the fact that vigorous and symmetrical thinking tends naturally to find expression in rhythmical and well-rounded forms of speech; and bluff old Cato gives us his epitome of rhetoric in four words *rem tene, verba*

* The amount of talk and the poverty of fact in these books combined would be incredible to any one not accustomed to German writers. Even in the Dictionnaire Pédagogique, the French writer makes certain inferences on very slender foundations of fact.